



# Strategic Plan 2013-2015

## Customer Centered, Community Focused: A Strategy for Relevance

**Approved  
September 12, 2012**





Displayed in the Burke Centre Library is this slice of a 200-year old oak tree that once stood on property near the library. Struck by lightening a few years before the library was built, it has been preserved thanks to the efforts of Fairfax County's Department of Public Works and Environmental Services. Its rings denote significant events in the history of Burke.

*“A public library is the most enduring of memorials, the trustiest monument for the preservation of an event or a name or an affection; for it, and it only, is respected by wars and revolutions, and survives them.”*

*Mark Twain (American humorist, writer and lecturer. 1835-1910)*

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In January 2011 the library asked its pool of Customer Advisors the following question:  
“What is a library in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?”

*“A library should evolve with the population it serves.”*

*“The library should be a conduit for connections among people and to organizations.”*

*“I consider our nation’s library systems to be part of the critical information infrastructure.”*

*“Access to knowledge and community. Those two things are what make the country great.”*

*“A library is my personal resource to the world.”*

*“The medium may change, but the purpose remains the same: free exchange of ideas, access to information, and empowerment through knowledge!”*

# Preface



Edwin S. Clay, III  
Library Director

## **A message from Edwin S. Clay, III Director, Fairfax County Public Library**

This three-year Strategic Plan 2012-2015 for the Fairfax County Public Library represents another milestone in the library's strategic reorganization process. This is an exciting time for the library as we sharpen our focus on our customers and extend our reach into the communities we serve.

This plan picks up from our previous strategic plans where we outlined library roles and service responses, determining core and enhanced levels of service. As we worked to provide the excellent library services and outstanding customer service that our community has come to expect, we identified the need to realign the library's organizational structure with twenty-first century needs. The new paradigm is for governmental institutions to work collaboratively with community groups to address social issues such as early literacy. The library is a large organization that needs to continually evolve in order to remain responsive to the needs of our community.

A great library system is vital to the continued development and enrichment of Fairfax County and its residents. Our new organizational model allows us to be more customer centered, provide for greater community and employee involvement and be more responsive to change. We now have a customer services director focusing on key areas like community engagement and partnerships, Internet services, marketing and communications, circulation services and program and educational services. Our support services have been consolidated and library administration reorganized. Under this revised structure, the library is pursuing new ways of doing business that increase staff efficiency, increase customer self-sufficiency, promote literacy and community awareness and improve access to our resources.

We now have the opportunity to formalize these changes with the creation of a new strategic plan – one with goals that are not only timely and relevant to customers and the community, but also aligned with the vision and priorities of Fairfax County. Much as we look back at our previous strategic plans to see how far we have come, I anticipate looking back at this plan three years from now with the same sense of pride in what can be accomplished through collaboration, innovation, creativity and hard work.

Edwin S. Clay, III, Library Director

# Section 1

## Introduction

### Stakeholders of the Library

Important stakeholders and valued partners in the future success of the Fairfax County Public Library include

### Residents of Fairfax County

### Residents of the City of Fairfax

### Worldwide Users of the library

### Library Staff

### County Board of Supervisors and other Elected Officials

### Library Board of Trustees

### Fairfax Library Foundation

### Friends of the Library

### Fairfax County and Fairfax City Public Schools, private schools and others in the education community

### Fairfax County's business community

### The Library Profession and other Library Systems

### Purpose of this Strategic Plan

Public libraries are at a crossroads. Rarely has such a historically respected, valued and uniquely American institution been called upon to redefine its mission as the public library in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. How information is accessed and used is continuously evolving. The age of enlightenment meets the information age meets the digital age; Gutenberg has entered the cloud. The ways in which people interact with each other and the tools/resources needed to operate effectively in this transformative age require that the library find new approaches for offering its services and resources. The library must evolve to keep pace with both electronic change and the diversity of its users, ensuring all Fairfax County and City of Fairfax have residents access to the world of ideas. This strategic plan is the result of a commitment by library management, a series of customer surveys and conversations about the future of the library, and will provide direction as the library navigates this period of internal transition and external societal and technological shifts. The plan is intended not only to provide vision and direction, but to be a dynamic, living document that evolves as the Fairfax County Public Library adjusts thoughtfully and adapts confidently to emerging opportunities and challenges for the benefit of our customers and all Fairfax County and City of Fairfax residents.

### Planning Process and Inputs

In FY 2009 the library received a study commissioned by the Library Board of Trustees and generously sponsored by the Fairfax Library Foundation titled *Toward Vital, Valuable Public Library Services in 2020*, a report by Eleanor Jo Rodgers on ensuring relevant, valuable library services. This report laid the foundation for the customer-centered, community-focused approach. On the heels of delivery of this report were two consecutive years of budget reductions.

The Library Board of Trustees re-launched the strategic planning process in April 2011 at their annual retreat to chart a course to enable the library to meet the information needs of the 21st century. Underlying research and community input for this plan was gathered over a seven-month period through a series of surveys and open forums.

#### Conversations with the Director

July and August 2011 – The library hosted a series of three public forum sessions with the library director. These attracted library customers, neighborhood residents and community leaders to discuss the future of the library.

#### Online Input

November 2011 – Visitors to the library's website provided their input by completing a short survey. Nearly 200 respondents answered questions about their use of the website and library priorities for the future; they offered insights into the planning process.





Library Director Sam Clay hosts "Conversations with the Director" at the Oakton Library.

### In-Library User Survey

November and December 2011 – More than 4,100 people responded to a library user survey administered in all 23 library branches. Respondents answered questions about their current use of library resources, the importance of library services to their lives and their views regarding future priorities for the library. Nearly 900 respondents also volunteered to become FCPL Customer Advisors, providing input to online queries three to four times each year.

### Staff Input

December 2011 and January 2012 – Library staff were asked to complete a survey that asked questions about staff development and training issues, customer service and strategic planning. Nearly two-thirds of all staff responded, representing every department and every branch in the system. Branch respondents showed a nearly 50-50 split between information and circulation staff.

### In Addition

The library director has taken the opportunity to speak with PTA groups, civic associations and library user groups whenever possible over the past 12 months.

## Major Themes of the Plan

Sifting through the wealth of information gathered throughout this process, the strategic planning steering committee identified key cornerstones that provide the foundation for library service and helped focus their discussions in development of the strategic plan. Ensuring information access for Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax residents remains a library priority. The library's collection is extremely important to customers. While guaranteeing customers have access to material in formats they are comfortable using, the library will continue to expand digital resources and technological capabilities. Libraries play a vital role in Fairfax's neighborhoods and communities. To emphasize and strengthen this bond, the library will seek to increase strategic partnerships and participate in civic engagement opportunities that expand its reach, ensuring the library not only has a seat at the table, but perhaps **is** the table upon which discussion and dissemination of information takes place at the neighborhood level. The Fairfax County Public Library will actively reach out to customers and communities, listening to and connecting them with information resources where they are. Finally, the library's ability to actively educate, enrich and empower our communities requires an organizational culture of innovation and creativity. The library is committed to fostering this culture.



Director Clay fields participants' questions at the Oakton Library "Conversation."



Attendees at the "Oakton Conversation" offer thoughts on library resources, services and priorities for the future.

# Acknowledgements

Several groups and individuals contributed their experience, opinions and insight to the development of this plan. As an institution funded by and for the public, a great deal of effort has gone into consulting the public about the future of the library. Library staff members have been involved throughout the process, whether through survey responses or blog postings, providing valuable insight into the evolving usage patterns, preferences and needs of library customers. More than half of library employees shared their ideas through a survey that asked about future priorities for the library, changes in how people use library resources, and suggestions for new or better ways to serve library customers.

Throughout this planning process, the strategic planning steering committee met regularly to review inputs and consider the specifics of various topics including the impact of digital media, community outreach, partnerships and technology. The steering committee served as a sounding board, refining emerging strategies and creatively thinking outside the box but not forgetting what that box is.

We would like to acknowledge the support and contribution of the Library Board of Trustees, the library’s governing body, who inaugurated the plan and provided input at key junctures. This strategic plan will guide our efforts and is intended to set an ambitious course for the future of the library.

## Library Board of Trustees

(as of September 2012)

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Represents Fairfax County Public Schools
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(as of September 2012)

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- Mary S. Petersen  
Fairfax County Public Library Board of Trustees
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Executive Director, Fairfax Library Foundation

## Strategic Planning Steering Committee Members

Edwin S. Clay, III  
Director  
Fairfax County Public Library

Renee Edwards  
Early Literacy Outreach Manager

Jane Goodwin  
Library Deputy Director

Robert Harvey  
Circulation Services Manager

Martha Sue Hess  
Strategic Planning and Customer Research

Danielle Hopson  
Training Specialist

Helen Ignatenko  
Branch Manager  
Kings Park Library

Sheila Janega  
Branch Manager  
Pohick Regional Library

Debbie King  
Branch Coordinator

Margaret Kositch  
Asst. Branch Manager  
Chantilly Regional Library

Matt Major  
Page Manager  
Thomas Jefferson Library

John McGillvray  
Page Manager  
Richard Byrd Library

Douglas Miller  
Strategic Planner and Customer Research Manager

Jerilyn Polson  
Branch Manager  
Oakton Library

Melanie Quinn  
Financial Services Manager

Elizabeth Rhodes  
Collection Services Manager

Emily Riley  
Youth Services Manager  
Herndon Fortnightly Library

Katie Strotman  
Customer Services Director

Pat White-Williams  
Branch Coordinator

The members of the strategic planning steering committee would like to acknowledge and thank the many individual library staff members from all levels of the organization who, through their survey responses, blog postings, emails, comments, conversations, editorial review and helpful advice, contributed to the development of the Fairfax County Public Library strategic plan.



# Section 2

## The Library and Community

### Fundamentally Valued

Our past success is largely due to three fundamentally valued areas of support upon which we will continue to depend for our future success:

- Close working relationship, advocacy and financial support from Fairfax County's elected leadership and private funding sources secured and managed by the Fairfax Library Foundation
- Professional leadership, passion and commitment from library staff and the Library Board of Trustees
- An active involvement from the Friends of the Library, Branch Advisors, Customer Advisors, volunteers and community advocates

These fundamentally valued areas of support have allowed the library to develop into a nationally-recognized system, reaching our communities in meaningful ways through 23 vibrant locations, a dynamic online presence and knowledgeable, dedicated staff.



Herndon Fortnightly Library

### The Fairfax County Public Library: Recession and Reorganization

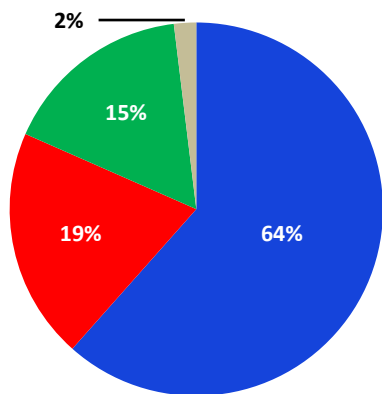
The Fairfax County Public Library has been practicing strategic planning since 1980 when the library commissioned a study by HBW Associates of the *Physical Facilities/Space Needs to 2000*. This study laid the groundwork for the library as a regional library system. Though officially established by vote of the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors in 1939, the Fairfax County Public Library has been providing information learning services to communities since 1897.

Fiscal year 2009 was a banner year for the library with record circulation of nearly 14 million items and a record number of visits totaling more than six million. The library in 2009 was also in the final stages of a capital program made possible by voters in 2004 who approved a \$52.5 million library bond referendum. This capital program saw the construction of new libraries in Oakton and Burke Centre, the relocation of the City of Fairfax Regional Library to a new building, as well as the renovation of the system's four oldest community libraries (Dolley Madison, Martha Washington, Richard Byrd and Thomas Jefferson). Savings associated with these projects have enabled the library to renovate the Woodrow Wilson Library as well, which is currently in the planning stages.

In the midst of the capital program and planning for the future, the economic collapse now widely called the "great recession" struck all levels of society. In FY 2010 Fairfax County faced a budget shortfall of approximately \$648 million and the library's budget was reduced by 15 percent. Drastic adjustments to staffing levels occurred. Virtually all of the library's exempt part-time staff were lost and with them, the flexibility needed to operate libraries under existing hours of operation. Consequently, hours of operation were reduced 19 percent from the previous levels. In FY 2011 Fairfax County faced a budget shortfall of \$257 million and the library's budget was reduced an additional 6 percent. Additional staff were lost and operating hours reduced again by 9 percent. Among the many structural changes made in the course of these reductions was a reorganization of library administration to reflect a greater emphasis on customer service and strategic planning. The new positions of customer services director and strategic planner were created to reflect this emphasis. With a more stable budget outlook, the focus has shifted from survival, to becoming as vital to the lives of Fairfax County residents as possible. On the heels of this reorganization, FCPL looks to the future, beginning a new era of strategic planning and services to the community.

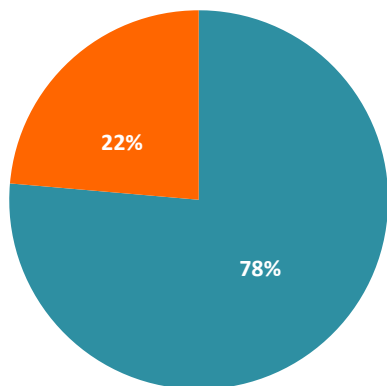
*"The library is of huge value to me and the citizens of Fairfax County. I consider a trip to the library as normal as a trip to the grocery store and just as vital. Libraries will continue to grow in value as they embrace new media and I see signs of that now – the library is keeping up with the new directions of the population." FCPL Customer Advisor*

## FCPL Adopted Budget FY 2013



Library Operations	\$17,438,433
Support Services	\$ 5,306,284
Administration	\$ 4,189,784
Archives & Records Management	\$ 527,341
	<b>\$27,461,842</b>

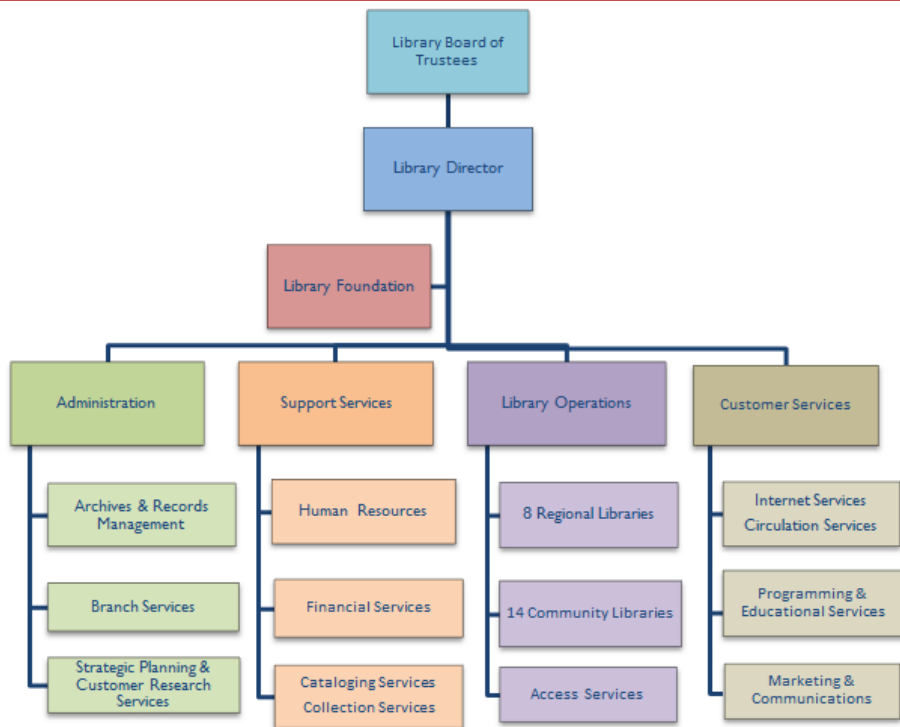
## Expenditures



Personnel	\$21,310,774
Operating	\$ 6,151,068

Funding received from Fairfax County supports the library's basic operational expenses including salaries and materials.

Other funding sources include state aid, private contributions through the Fairfax Library Foundation, Friends of the Library and grants that support library programs for all ages, resource enhancements and the materials budget. These funding sources supplement Fairfax County's investment in the library.

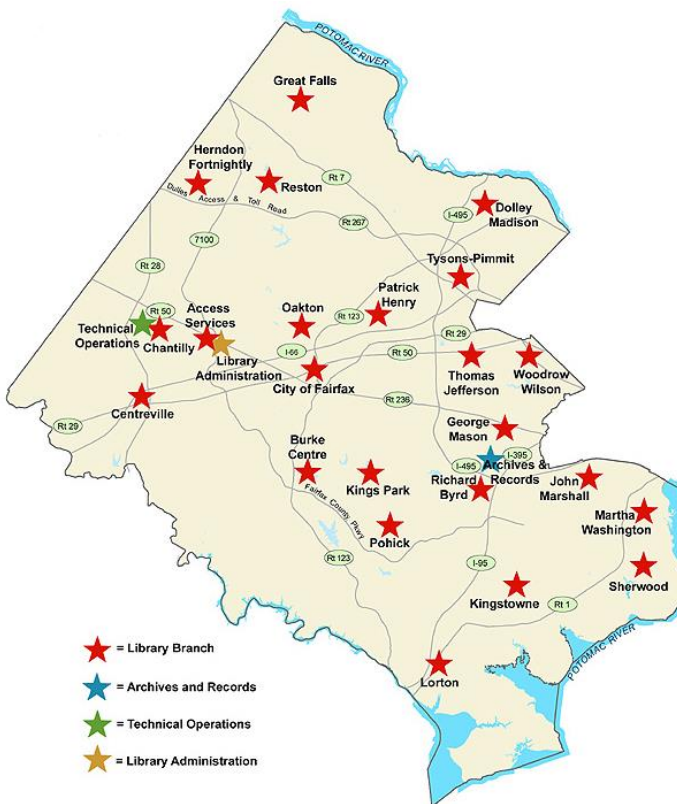


## Library Overview

The Fairfax County Public Library is the largest library system in Virginia and is a Fairfax County government agency funded through the county's general fund. The library budget accounts for less than 1 percent of annual county expenditures. The Library Board of Trustees is responsible for library policies and for making budget recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. The 12-member, volunteer board is composed of one member-at-large, appointed by the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors; and nine members appointed by each member of the Board of Supervisors; one member appointed by the City of Fairfax Council; and one member nominated by the School Board. Library Director Edwin S. Clay III, reports to the Library Board of Trustees, providing guidance, leadership and vision for the library.

More than 80 percent of the library's nearly 400 staff members work in direct customer service at one of 23 branch locations. Though hours vary by branch, library service is available in Fairfax County seven days a week, and weekdays from 10a.m. to 9p.m. The libraries provide a variety of events for all age groups including early literacy education, English conversation groups, computer tutoring, blood drives, flu clinics, author programs and book clubs. Staff provide reference assistance and readers' advisory recommendations.

FCPL's collection contains more than two-million items including thousands of eBook and eAudiobook selections. Branches provide quiet study room space and access to meeting rooms for large group collaboration. Our meeting rooms are available free to the public, some even before/after normal library hours. All branches provide public Internet workstations and access to Wi-Fi.



The library's Access Services branch, located in Suite 123 of the Fairfax County Government Center, helps make the collection and programs accessible to people with sight and hearing disabilities.

The archives and records management branch provides professional assistance and advice to county agencies on the management, retention and storage of their records. It ensures that legally mandated retention schedules, preservation standards, security measures and levels of access are followed for both permanent and non-permanent records regardless of the physical format or location of such records.

The library's support services department includes collection services and cataloging services and is responsible for selecting and cataloging a wide range of materials including books, periodicals, audiobooks, etc. Digital materials such as eBooks, ePeriodicals and eAudiobooks are a growing area of purchase in a rapidly changing publishing environment. Cataloging services provides bibliographic access to, organizes and physically prepares library materials so that customers can find what they are looking for in the online catalog, the branch collection and/or digitally.

## FY2011 Statistical Snapshot

- More than 5.4 million people visited a branch of the Fairfax County Public Library, checking out more than 13.2 million items
- FCPL has nearly half a million registered borrowers
- The library's website attracted more than 4.5 million visitors, and the catalog recorded more than 10.1 million logins
- The library offered more than 8,000 programs attended by nearly 150,000 people of all ages
- Thousands of fans follow the library on social media including Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Flickr
- The library goes where you go with the mobile app
- Library staff conducted 122 tours of FCPL facilities for nearly 3,000 people including daycare providers, preschools, seniors and language learners
- Nearly 4,000 people improved their reading, language and computer skills by taking advantage of the library's one-on-one tutoring sessions



Nearly 50,000 children of all ages participated in the library's Summer Reading Program in 2011. Here kids enjoy Reptile Wonders at the Oakton Library.



# Our Community

FCPL serves a population of more than 1.1 million people including Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax, as well as the towns of Clifton, Herndon and Vienna, all located within Fairfax County.

Once a farming community neighboring the nation's capital, Fairfax County is now a major business center in the Washington, D.C. area. The county is the largest jurisdiction in the Washington area at more than 400 square miles and more than a million people. Fairfax County also contains some of the area's most affluent residential communities.

With over 177,000 students enrolled, Fairfax County Public Schools is the largest public school system in the Baltimore-Washington and Northern Virginia Metropolitan Areas. The school division is the 11<sup>th</sup> largest school system in the nation and maintains the largest bus fleet of any school system in the U.S.

Fairfax County offers its residents a broad range of historical and entertainment options including the National Air and Space Museum's Udvar-Hazy



View of proposed Mosaic-Merrifield Town Center development. The project was approved for approximately 1,000 dwelling units, a multiplex theatre, 125,000 square feet of office space, 500,000 square feet of other non-residential uses and a 150-room hotel. Among the improvements are construction of two parks. Virtually all parking will be provided in structures.

*"I would say that the service provided by the FCPL is not just valuable, but invaluable. The breadth and depth of the FCPL is one county service that makes me really glad I live in Fairfax County."*  
FCPL Customer Advisor



Center and George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate. Wolf Trap, the nation's only national park for the performing arts, is in Fairfax County.

Fairfax County's dynamic business community is in the forefront of one of the strongest economies in the country. Along with its well-known strengths in government and defense technology, the county has large and growing numbers of commercial IT, financial, software, communication and technology management service providers.

Fairfax County offers an outstanding quality of life for its residents including numerous parks, golf courses and bike trails. There is an established arts community, world-class shopping and dining, numerous historical and cultural attractions, as well as nearby Washington D.C.'s world-renowned museums, arts centers and theatres.

Fairfax County has a lot to offer – a dynamic business community, a range of housing options, an abundance of recreational opportunities, and proximity to Washington, D.C.<sup>1</sup>

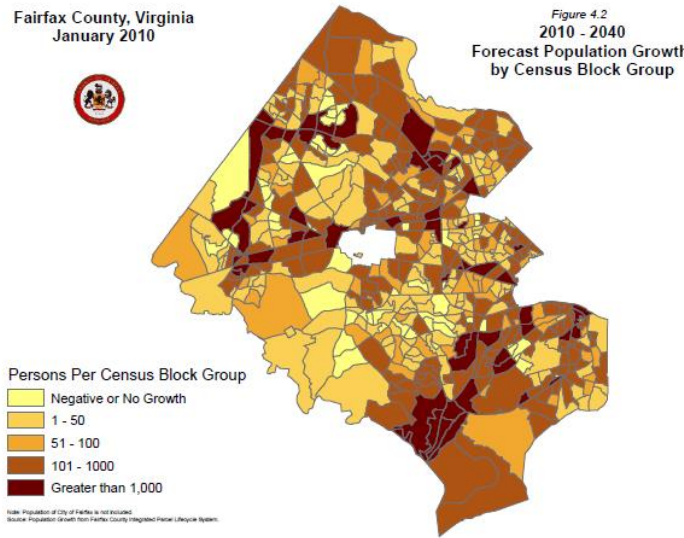
<sup>1</sup> Fairfax County Economic Development Authority  
Rendering credit – Office of Community Revitalization

Fairfax County's 2010 Census population of 1,081,726 exceeds that of eight states – Alaska, Delaware, Montana, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming. Along with Fairfax County's rapid urbanization, the county has experienced rapid cultural diversification. In 1970, less than 7 percent of the county's population were ethnic or racial minorities.

Today over 45 percent of the county's population are ethnic or racial minorities. This rapid diversification follows a nationwide trend. What is unique to Fairfax County is that no single minority group dominates, the community is a highly diverse tapestry consisting of persons from virtually every nation in the world. Among residents who moved to Fairfax County during the past year, nearly 48 percent were ethnic or racial minorities and nearly a third were immigrants.

The county is expected to have a rapidly increasing population of persons age 65 and older as the Baby Boom generation ages. As of 2011, the oldest boomers turn 65 but the greatest impacts will occur beginning in 2026<sup>2</sup> when the boomers reach age 80.

This growth presents challenges and opportunities for the library, including the need to remain visible and accessible to people of all ages, income and education levels, cultural backgrounds and disabilities.



*"Services are invaluable, the library is improving my quality of life. Thank You!"*  
2011 Survey Respondent  
Sherwood Regional Library



View of proposed Tysons development . By 2050, Tysons will be transformed into a walkable, sustainable urban center that will be home to up to 100,000 residents and 200,000 jobs.

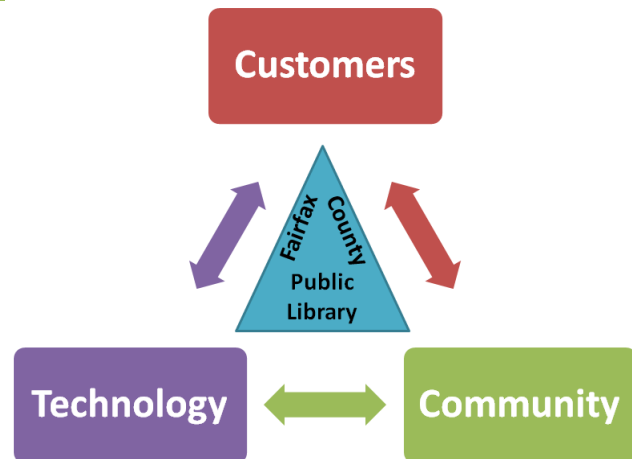
<sup>2</sup> Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services:  
Trends and Implications for County Residents May 2011  
Rendering credit – City Line

# Section 3

## Cornerstones and Guiding Statements

### The Cornerstones

The Fairfax County Public Library recognizes three universal aspects of service. These “cornerstones” provide a foundation of excellence upon which the library will continue to build. Each plays a significant role in determining the library’s services and resources, as well as the manner in which they are delivered. Through these cornerstones the library supports all learning experiences, is accessible to everyone, reaches every demographic and connects to the communities.



### Customers

FCPL aspires to create relationships with customers that last for generations, to their children and grandchildren. More than one in every five registered borrowers has been an active FCPL library cardholder for a decade or longer. Staff strive to foster this customer loyalty by consistently exceeding expectations and delivering excellence in every aspect of service. Staff respect our customers and are interested in, and committed to their success. The library values customer input into the decision-making process and is expanding opportunities for participation through the formation of branch advisory groups. Customers are empowered through a variety of self-service opportunities. The library is committed to:

- Providing outstanding service
- Presenting a courteous, professional manner
- Providing a positive customer experience
- Respecting the individual and the community
- Maintaining safe and welcoming facilities
- Intellectual freedom



Customers investigate the book sale offerings at the Reston Regional Library.



Customers explore the DVD collection at the Reston Regional Library.



## Technology

Information technology is essential to all aspects of library service for both staff and customers. Technological change requires that staff are current and proficient in their technical skills as they create opportunities to educate customers. The social media world of Facebook, Twitter and other social networks offer additional opportunities for dialog with customers and the community. The library's technological future will be decided not only by economics, but to a large extent by the technology business leaders who introduce new products and advances without the slightest consideration of libraries. So it falls to staff to decide if, and how, we can use these advances. It is not just a matter of seeing a problem and fixing it with a piece of software -- that's just keeping pace. To get ahead we have to get beyond what's familiar and be courageous enough to introduce items that customers would not usually associate with a library; courageous enough to let go of tradition and to embrace the new. "What we really need right now are breakthrough, paradigm-shifting, transformative, and disruptive ideas."<sup>3</sup> The library is committed to:

- Technological growth and its innovative use
- Providing access to resources and materials that anticipate and respond to community interests and needs
- Ensuring staff are proficient in using current and future information services technology
- Providing customers access and training in the latest information services technology
- Providing Internet access to all library services

## Community

The library is a community resource and reflects the community it serves. As recommended by the library's study *Toward Vital, Valuable Public Library Services in 2020*, the library will more closely align its services with the needs of the customers and communities we serve. The library enriches the community through partnerships with other government agencies, collaboration with neighborhood schools and teachers, community organizations and local businesses. With Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax becoming increasingly diverse, it is important for the library to reflect the communities it serves. As of May 2009, 44 percent of all elementary school students in Fairfax County Public Schools spoke a language other than English at home, with more than 100 different languages represented.<sup>4</sup> This diversity presents challenges and opportunities for the library, including the need to remain visible and accessible to people of all ages, income and education levels, cultural backgrounds and disabilities. The library is committed to:

- Working cooperatively with groups and individuals in our communities
- Forming strong and innovative partnerships
- Being a learning organization that takes appropriate risks in pursuit of meeting community needs
- Improving the quality of life for all in Fairfax County and the City of Fairfax
- Provides resources in languages and formats that anticipate and respond to community needs

Celebrating the new Vietnamese book collection at the Thomas Jefferson Library.



Asian Heritage music and dance celebration at the George Mason Regional Library.

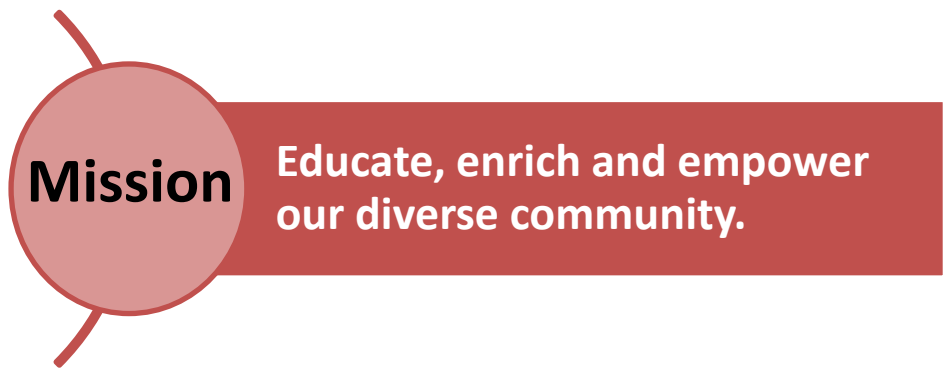
<sup>3</sup> Think Like a Startup: A white paper to inspire library entrepreneurialism by Brian Mathews

<sup>4</sup> Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services:

Trends and Implications for County Residents May 2011

Photo credit — Fairfax Library Foundation

## Mission and Vision



**Mission** Educate, enrich and empower our diverse community.

Why does FCPL exist? Can the answer be (or should it be) as simple as “to provide books, storytime programs and Internet access,” or does it run deeper than that? The library provides a variety of services and access to a multitude of resources. Chief among them are early literacy services; programming for children and adults; a clean, safe place to read, work, study and collaborate; written materials in a variety of formats including print, large print, audio and electronic; public access computers, Wi-Fi capabilities, online resources and an app for handheld devices. The list goes on and on but it is not our mission to provide these services and resources. Rather, it is through these services and resources that the library strives to fulfill its mission to “educate, enrich and empower our diverse community.” That is our purpose, our unique reason to exist. No other organization aims to do that for all residents. Change is the new normal, it is inevitable and vital. Change empowers us; services and resources evolve; the methods we use to accomplish our mission are fluid, but the relevance of our mission continues.



**Vision** The library is vital to the life of every resident.

Where do we go from here? A vision represents the desired future state of the library and presents a compelling, conceptual, vivid image of the desired future for the library. While some may consider this vision unattainable, we wish to emphasize the journey even though the conclusion is uncertain. Our vision: “the library is vital to the life of every resident” is an example of aspirational thinking about the future and not an over-inflated view of the library. When we can engage customers to the point where they inherently think that the library will fill their needs in any number of ways, we will have reached this lofty vision. Our vision is based on the process of making a personal connection with people through a framework based on connecting, discovering, educating and responding. We seek to strategically align our vision for the future with the priorities set by residents, staff and elected officials. This recognizes customers as individuals and makes library use personal. By focusing on relationship building and service excellence, the library can meet new and evolving needs and be in position to have a positive impact.

# What We Value

Values are human factors which drive the conduct of an agency and guide its development and actions. These core values summarize the operating philosophies that will be utilized in fulfillment of the vision and mission. Values are the bridge between where we are and where we want to be. The library is a **customer-centered organization** that values:



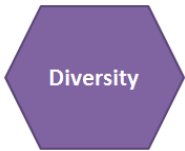
FCPL is committed to providing outstanding service to all customers in a courteous and confidential manner. The library respects our customers’ requests for information, the online sites they access and their borrowing history.



FCPL promotes the love of books and the importance of reading. The library values reading and information literacy for the knowledge, power and pleasure they bring. It recognizes that reading and information literacy provide a foundation for lifelong learning, opening doors and expanding horizons. We define information literacy as “recognizing there is a need for information and being able to identify, locate, evaluate and effectively use that information”<sup>5</sup>.



FCPL is committed to intellectual freedom and to providing convenient, equitable and open access to our resources and services.



FCPL finds strength in diversity - in our community, customers, staff, volunteers and materials. The library strives to ensure that all people feel welcome in the library.



FCPL values and recognizes the professionalism, dedication and expertise of our employees and volunteers. The library is committed to providing a supportive work environment that offers opportunities for learning and professional development.



FCPL is committed to the prudent management of the library’s public funds, facilities and resources. The library actively promotes their wise use and sustainability.



FCPL extends its reach and impact in the community through partnerships with individuals, public and non-profit organizations, community groups, educators and businesses.

<sup>5</sup> American Library Association's (ALA) Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, Final Report

# Section 4

## System Direction and Strategic Goals

### A New Approach

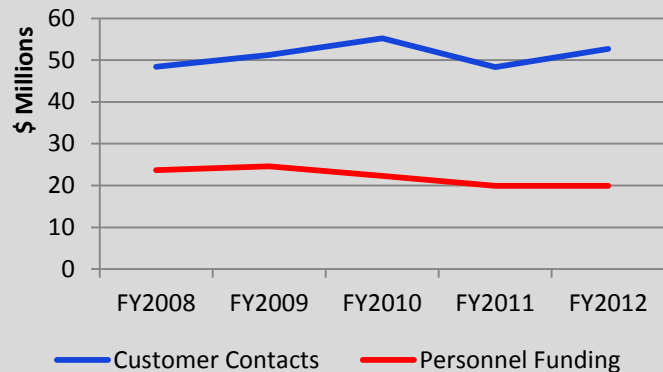
This iteration of Fairfax County Public Library's strategic plan represents a departure from the more predictable road map, the traditional to-do list approach typically used by libraries. There are a variety of forces arrayed against doing business as usual, call it the perfect storm of the library profession. Library budgets have been slashed; staffing has been reduced; hours of operation cut despite increasing demand for services; fewer materials are available even as the number of formats for those materials has increased; some publishers won't even sell their materials to public libraries. The library is accessible to everyone, meets every possible demographic, and is important to the county's quality of life yet library expenditures are viewed by decision makers as "discretionary."

Given this environment, it may no longer be appropriate to follow a uniform, 'one size fits all' model designed and driven at the administrative level to be executed at the branch level. Being strategic is about pushing boundaries, about stretching not just sustaining. It's too early to know what libraries will become, but we know they'll never be the same. It's up to us to help define what libraries will become. Rather than getting bogged down with a definition, of refreshing or repackaging, the time is ideal for launching a new approach with new ideas and new partnerships. The focus can't remain on how well we're doing right now, but on where we should be heading. Now is the time to move the library in a different direction, to get beyond what's familiar and help the individuals at our institutions become more successful.

This strategic plan assumes the library will staff branches to

- Provide customers maximum access (number of open hours) to library resources including collections, technology, space and assistance to use these resources
- Provide a working environment that enables staff to deliver library services to customers efficiently, with confidence and trained to create a top-quality customer experience
- Continue implementation of customer self-service features that effectively free staff to manage collections, serve customers and expand service to reach residents outside library walls
- Eliminate the "silo structure" within FCPL:
  - All managers in branches trained to be total branch PICs, skilled in circulation daily management activities, customer behavior management, information transactions and opening/closing procedures
  - Circulation staff trained to handle information/directional transactions
  - Information staff cross-trained to handle routine circulation transactions
  - Creation of combined positions trained to handle most customer transactions, ready to work at single-point-of-service desks

Library Use vs. Personnel Funding



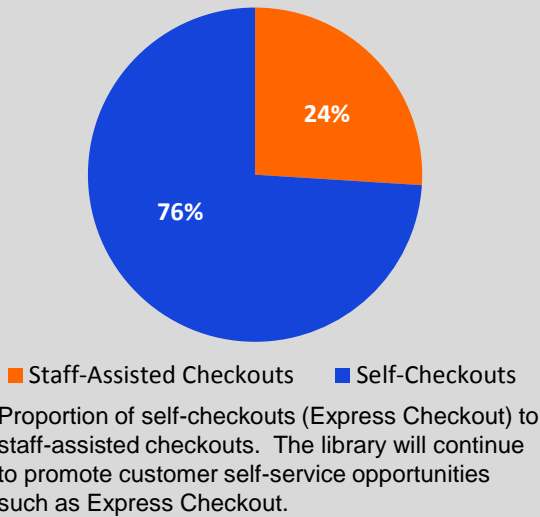
Comparison of increases in customer contacts with the library compared to levels of personnel funding illustrates that while demand for services increases, resources do not increase correspondingly, resulting in the need for new service models and increased self-service options for customers.

## Future Direction

The customer is FCPL’s focus. The library will transition from:

- A print environment to a digital environment
- In-branch services to in-the-community services
- Separate departments to an integrated service delivery model
- Covering the public service desks to offering library services anywhere in the branch or community
- Varying staff abilities with e-formats and devices to consistent staff mastery of e-formats and devices
- Storing books and materials to providing instruction to customers

Self-Checkout vs. Staff-Assisted Checkout  
FY 2012



The library’s staffing assumptions and future direction provide the basis for this plan. The system-wide structure, as outlined in our guiding statements and strategic goals is one that establishes an umbrella under which individual branches will have increased freedom and authority to try new ideas that are usable, feasible and valuable, that are user focused as opposed to information focused. Library administration will set the goals, priorities and overall direction for the system in alignment with those goals and priorities of Fairfax County. Within this system structure and in accordance with branch community assessments and customer input, individual libraries will have discretion in developing models that reflect and respond to the needs of their communities while helping the system achieve its strategic goals. Let’s not be satisfied with business as usual, but instead use our imaginations to dream big and create amazing experiences that transform our users.

## Strategic Goals

Based on extensive input from the community and staff, the library’s strategic planning steering committee identified four over-arching goals that emphasize the library’s strengths and take advantage of strategic opportunities. Along with our guiding statements, these goals were presented to the library director’s management group as the system-wide structure of the library’s strategic plan. The PowerPoint file was then made available to all staff for their review and comment. To facilitate the review process the library utilized FairfaxNet, a web-based collaboration tool to foster increased communication and sharing of information. The library created a strategic planning blog to enable and encourage comment on the proposed structure of the plan. The blog site provided links to the presentation, to committee meeting notes and discussions, relevant articles and direct email access to the library’s strategic planner. Staff were able to post and comment to the blog anonymously by using a generic login.



## Expand access to information, resources and services.

The library plays a key role in the life of our community by providing access to a variety of information, resources and services. This goal reflects the importance the Library Board of Trustees places on “access” as well as speaks to the county Board of Supervisors’ priority of providing residents with “recreational and cultural opportunities.” To FCPL, ‘access’ holds a variety of meanings. It means providing safe and clean buildings with adequate hours of operation and Internet access to the library’s website and catalog. It means a well-rounded collection of materials reflecting different tastes and points of view available in a variety of different formats (electronic, large-print, audio). It means staff ready and willing to answer questions, find materials and explain how to use resources. It means public Internet workstations and Wi-Fi availability. Access means that it’s on-the-shelf, online, handheld, and everywhere you are. Expanding access also means making sure the community knows all that the library has and all that we do; customers can’t use it if they don’t know it’s there.

FCPL is fortunate to be restoring nine hours of service each week at regional libraries and six hours each week at community libraries during FY 2013. The funding for expanded hours at both regional and community libraries includes monies for staffing. The target date to introduce the new hours will be September 2012. These increased hours will help the library expand customer access to information, resources and services while increased staffing will assist customers with usage of that content.

## Enhance Fairfax County’s investment in education.

This FCPL goal acknowledges the county Board of Supervisors’ top priority of providing “a quality education system.” In 2011 fully 20 percent of all registered library users (97,889) were primary school age, 6-18 years-old. This represents approximately 52 percent of Fairfax County’s entire school age population<sup>6</sup>. The library offers many materials and programs that focus on literacy and strengthen reading skills, including Reading Buddies, summer reading program, teen book discussion groups, educational programs and many more. The library offers classes and materials to assist those learning English and conversation groups for those trying to learn a new language. Though many decision makers feel that the local school system has a monopoly on education the reality is somewhat different. For example:

**Early Literacy** – In FY 2011 over 95 percent of FCPS schools with Head Start classrooms receive visits from the library’s early literacy outreach department. During these visits early literacy skills are presented through storytimes and fingerplays and children learn more about the library and books. In addition, teachers hear more about pre-reading skills and best practices that can be modeled in future story sessions with the children. Head Start students also come to the library on field trips and receive library tours. FCPL has an early literacy outreach manager and over 25 volunteers that reach low income daycare and childcare centers. Preschool storytimes are presented at all library branches and highlight pre-reading skills, encouraging parents and caregivers to learn more about building reading readiness for school. This school support is further expanded by programs offered within the libraries for parents and caregivers needing or wanting additional learning opportunities.

**Summer Reading Program** – The library’s Summer Reading Program is a strong, on-going partnership with FCPS that has been in place for over 25 years. This program encourages reading for pleasure and helps maintain reading levels during the summer while children are not in school. The Summer Reading Program has strong support from business and community partners. School visits by FCPL librarians, special reading lists and programs are offered to students.



## Engage and empower our diverse communities.

The library recognizes its importance as a safe and respected neighborhood institution. With 23 points of service, FCPL is uniquely positioned to serve all our communities and reach all demographics. Fairfax County is becoming increasingly older and more diverse, presenting the library with both challenges and opportunities.

Different age groups have unique needs that require specific resources and services. Older residents in McLean and those in senior living centers close to libraries in Oakton and Springfield need information on health care, investment and retirement living. Leisure reading, book clubs, author visits and lectures are highly valued. Teen populations in Reston, Chantilly and Burke Centre need access to online textbooks, positive teen activities, Wi-Fi and group study spaces. School age children in Great Falls, Lorton and Vienna need homework support, space for tutoring and quiet study space. Preschool children in Mount Vernon, Herndon and Falls Church need early literacy programs, board books and storytimes.

Fairfax County has many cultural communities: Korean in Centreville and Annandale; Hispanic in Falls Church, Englewood and Alexandria; Vietnamese in Burke and Springfield; Chinese in Great Falls; Filipino in Kingstowne and Belleview; Asian Indian in Herndon; and other Asian populations in Reston and Franconia. Fairfax County Public School students speak more than 160 different languages. This growing diversity demands resources and services such as English conversation groups, ESL book clubs and materials in languages other than English.

Redevelopment efforts in Merrifield, Tysons Corner, Springfield, the Route 1 Corridor and development at Fort Belvoir related to the Base Realignment and Closing Commission (BRAC) will remake old neighborhoods and create new opportunities for the library to engage and empower our diverse communities, whether defined by age or ethnicity, language or geography.

## Foster a culture of innovation and creativity.

For the past few years the library has been in survival mode. Identified as a “discretionary” service, in times of severely strained budgets the focus has been simply to keep the doors open. Such an atmosphere has not been conducive to innovation and creativity. However, the fog is lifting and the library is emerging from the shadow of budget and staff reductions into the light of new opportunities. The library is refocusing efforts at the community and neighborhood level. Service to the customer, always of paramount importance to FCPL, is even more vital to our future success and the libraries are empowered to lead the way.

Through the use of the community assessment, each branch library will have greater discretion in tailoring services, resources, and spaces to better match the needs of their particular communities. Within the system “umbrella” of our mission, vision, values and four strategic goals, branches and departments will be encouraged to think outside the box while not forgetting what the box is. Though budgetary resources will continue to be constrained, if branches and departments can adequately identify customer/community/neighborhood needs, and then tie their actions back to one of the system’s strategic goals, they will be free to be as innovative and creative as their imaginations and resources allow.

This strategic plan is the library’s commitment to foster a culture of innovation and creativity. Library administration loosen the reins and allows staff to experiment. Communication needs to improve at all levels of the organization in order to move from this strategic plan to a strategic culture. Fairfax County Public Library has an incredibly dedicated staff, with creative, innovative and forward thinking individuals at all levels. Transformative ideas can come from anywhere and anyone. It is time to unleash that force so together we can transform the library into a model system for the 21st century.

## Branch and Department Initiatives

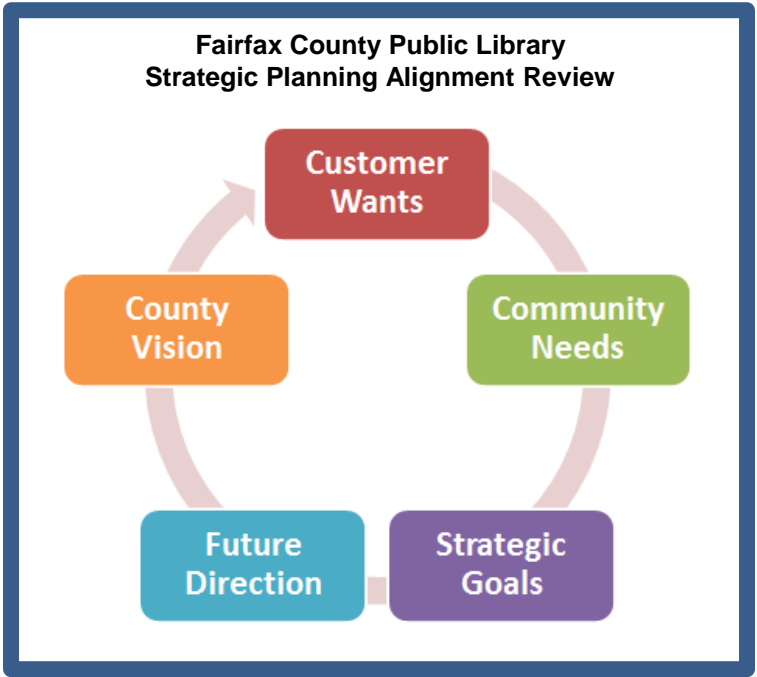
One key aspect of the plan continues to take shape - branch and department initiatives. These will be detailed in a future appendix to this document and are currently being prepared. In crafting these statements each branch library is utilizing customer survey data and community assessment information provided during the planning process to answer two important questions:

1. How does this initiative meet the demands of my customers?
2. How does this initiative help meet the needs of my community?

Branch managers (in cooperation with library staff), coordinators and department heads have been asked to complete a form asking that they propose one to three initiatives they plan to accomplish during the course of the fiscal year. The form has three sections in which each initiative is to be detailed:

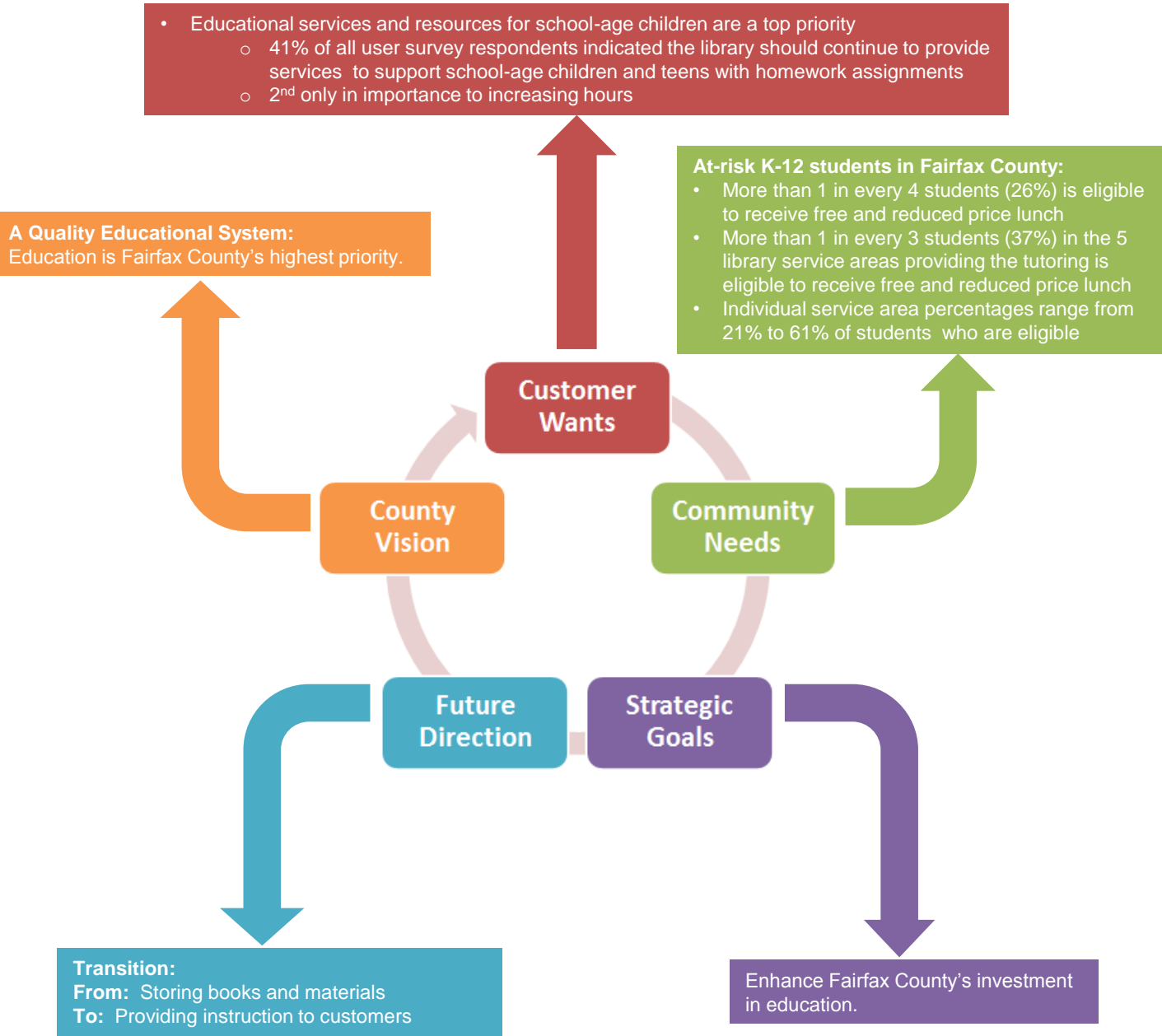
- The Basics
  - Description
  - Department resources needed (circulation, information, etc.)
  - System resources needed (financial, marketing, strategic planning, etc.)
- Alignment
  - w/strategic goals
  - w/future direction
  - w/county vision
- Assessment
  - Define success in meeting this initiative
  - How can the system measure success in meeting this initiative?

All proposed initiatives will be put through a review process at the administrative level to ensure the library's efforts match resources with community needs. In order to assist with this process, alignment review will ensure branch and department initiatives are in line with the library's strategic goals and future direction.



We must continuously ask ourselves “How does this help the customer?” Branches and departments will continue to ask themselves two other important questions: 1) Given the library’s future direction and four strategic goals, what can my branch or department do to meet the needs of my community? 2) How do my efforts at the branch or department level help the system achieve these goals? The following is an example of a prospective initiative and how alignment with the strategic plan might look.

**Sample Initiative:** Partner with GIVEYOUTH.org (Growth and Inspiration through Volunteering and Education) to provide tutoring services to at-risk elementary students in five select library locations throughout Fairfax County.



Examples of prospective initiatives currently under review:

Customer Research

- Utilize new GIS mapping and market research software to better understand the communities we serve

Programming

- Explore new options for early literacy programming within the community

Enhance Education

- Offer tutoring services to at-risk elementary school students through a partnership with GIVEYOUTH.org
- Increase services to school age children

Outreach

- Promote adult literacy in the Spanish speaking community through partnerships, preschool programming, attending literacy nights and family nights at local schools
- Organize eBook workshops for seniors in the community at the Bailey’s Senior Center
- Expand outreach to the local Vietnamese-American population by working more closely with the VNIAAA (Vietnam National Institute of Administrative Alumni Associations)

Partnerships

- Develop closer relationships with local schools and community organizations to increase ESOL programming



The grand reopening of the renovated Thomas Jefferson Library, July 2010.

*“The library system is an absolute jewel in the crown of Fairfax County. With people’s personal resources being curtailed by the recession, supporting the library is more important than ever, to be sure that all county residents have the resources they need.”*

*FCPL Customer Advisor*

# Conclusion

## Moving Forward

Much remains to be done. Individual library branches and departments will now be tasked with developing initiatives that align with the system's strategic goals and address the needs of their unique communities. This plan is intended to be flexible. It sets in place a system structure while allowing individual libraries to operate more freely within that structure. Ideally each library branch will create what amounts to their own strategic plan for how to better match their resources to the needs of their communities – under the umbrella of the system structure.

Fostering a culture of innovation and creativity is critical to our strategy for relevance. Libraries are changing, the library profession is changing, and the very definition of a “book” is changing. We must change as well; we can redefine what libraries do. The direction we take is up to us and it begins with fostering innovation and creativity. This will be a challenge for all. Improved communication between administration and the branches and from the branches to administration will be critical in turning this plan into reality. We all need to be on the same page in order to move forward together.

The current climate within FCPL is one of quiet apprehension, the deep breath before taking the plunge. The library has dealt with some very lean years and weathered severe budget reductions that reduced hours of operation and caused staff to watch as colleagues lost their jobs. Change has been difficult but with dust from the “great recession” finally settling, we are positioning ourselves to be more valued by our customers and more important to the quality of life of the communities we serve than ever before. This plan does not answer all questions or cover all eventualities, nor does it purport to. What it does do is establish a new baseline, a new vantage point from which to view and review our services. Yes, change will be disruptive, it will be messy and there will be growing pains but this is an exciting time for libraries. Let's change the profession, stretch ourselves, stake our claim and get our hands dirty.

As with everything the library does, we must ask ourselves, “How does this plan help the customer?” The hope is that this plan sets in place a more flexible structure that will allow our neighborhood libraries to be more responsive to customer needs and perhaps even anticipate those needs. This plan provides a strategy that encourages our libraries to be active participants in the community; to strengthen existing partnerships and form new ones; to be more aware not only of what our customers want, but what is needed in the communities we serve. Efficiencies gained through implementation of this plan will benefit both staff and customers and improve customer service. This plan challenges the library to become the resource hub of our communities and voices the need for a more user-friendly website and online presence, all of which should benefit not only our customers but all Fairfax County.



For additional information about the Strategic Plan  
of the Fairfax County Public Library, please visit our  
website at:

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/library/>

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